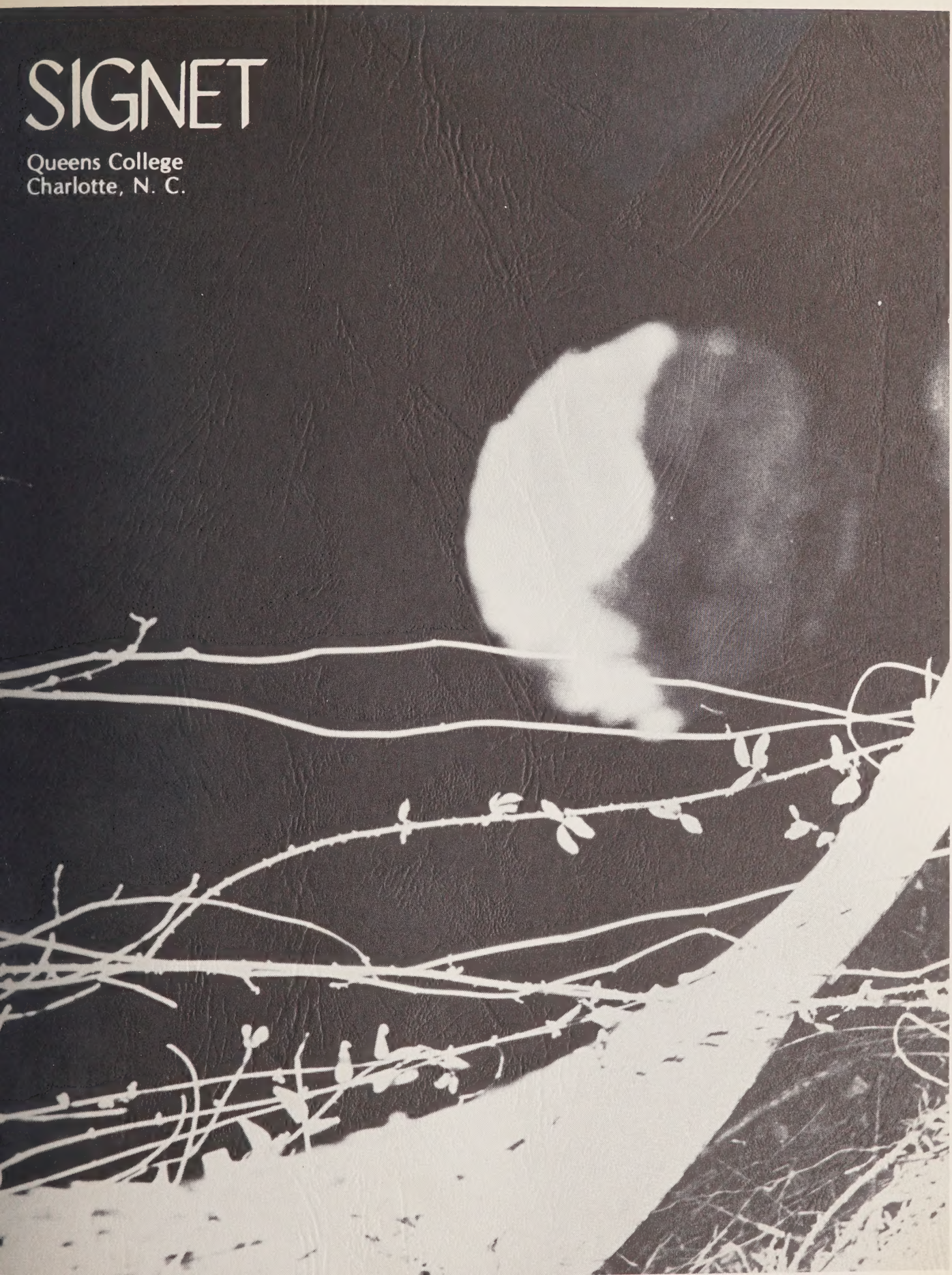
SIGNET

Queens College
Charlotte, N. C.



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SIGNET

Target practice -
I vaguely remember the day
(now as if a dream)
when just after cleaning
the magnum
you pretended to load it
with sleek silver bullets
and proceeded to point it at my head -
I laughed
And you pulled the trigger
in painstaking slow motion
as if to tease
me; that black,
two-dimensional shadow
on white paper
the F.B.I. uses
for target practice-
And for the first time
in the history
of our roulette games
and blank cartridges
this shadow fell
to the floor
leaving all white,
two-dimensional backgrounds behind -
Leaving little crumbs of my brain
in the sun to shrivel up
like poisoned grubworms
that surface the ground to die -
There is no more "let's pretend" -
And this whole thing
was a little more melodramatic
than I had planned
but I wanted you to see
that wounds which bleed once
bleed always-
on sight

Linda Jennings

SIX MONTHS AGO, LOCAL SEPTEMBER

It's fall again. Leaves
flee the slow trees
and run in new September wind.
Farther south hurricanes blow
water over the boots of bitten shores.
In the north the devil is making ready
to deliver snow as beautiful as bones.
The heads of trees and buildings march
stone bodies in the retreat.
A fire truck cruises by broadcasting
all you can eat
fish fry
fry.
The fish lie burnt on the trenches
like fried fingers.
Old men under grey hats lean chairs to brick,
adjust boots to rung, spit,
watch parades.

Gill Holland

MIRROR-IMAGE

I've seen you when you cried and tears streamed down your face onto the vinyl tablecloth leaving evidence of the circumstances.

I've seen you when you loved and lost and I never laughed because "loving" is rough and you're not always as strong as you think you are.

I've seen you when you longed to be a woman but feared it like a child.

I've seen you when the miles pulled you from arms of those you love and you stood alone and scared among shadowed faces and beneath strange skies..
..I've seen you..
...I've been outside of myself.

Terry A. Knox

and now I think
I'll buy a minute of your time
and make a couple of quick
confessions-
one -
now is when I'm supposed
to tell you about my dark
and deep breakdown I had
Three years ago with
shock treatment and mem-
ory wipeouts - doctors
and nurses so calm so
cool I thought they came
from another planet -
alien beings - (I feel
this is building to a
climax that exists
nowhere) - and I guess
I should tell you about
how frail this breakdown
made me and how cynical
and bitter it left me, but -
two -
I haven't had it yet -
and you know
You're always the last
to know about these things -

Linda Jennings

BIRD

A bird flew in my nest today.
From my window I watched
As he ruffled his feathers
And settled in,
Tucking his head under his wing.

His softness was a miracle,
And the cock of his head,
the brightness of his eye,
the furl of his wing,
in the nest I had built outside.

The business of the world
called me
and I left my post
by the window.
When I returned he was gone.

But the memory lingers
that he of all nests
should have chosen mine
to rest in
on his flight to wonder.

Anthony S. Abbot

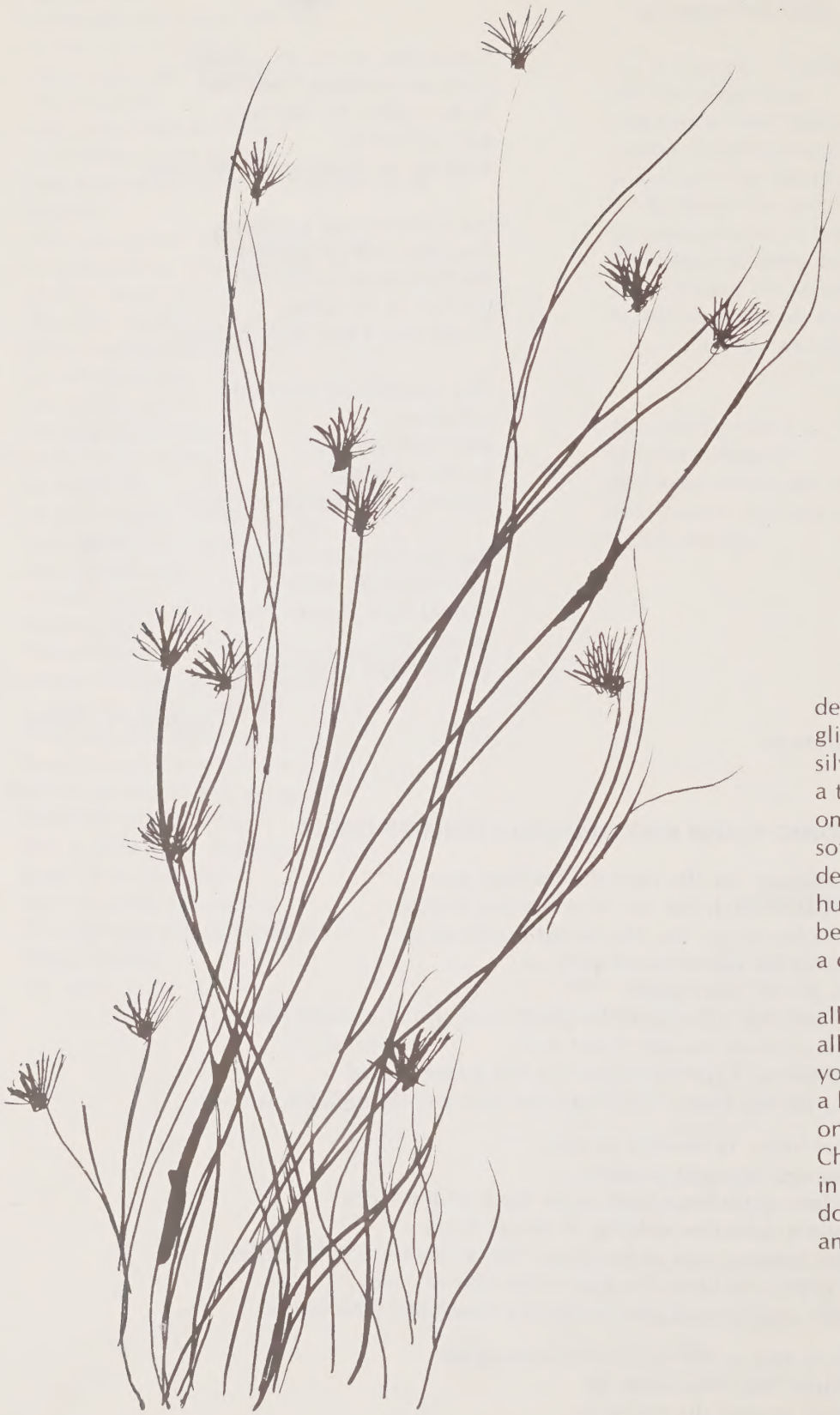
SENDING "I LOVE YOU" AROUND A WHISPER CIRCLE

The circle of whispers: by the time the halfway wave
leans over the backstretch the sun is in the tree midsts
and at the finish bursts out the blackened trunks its fire
through blue, and the words come back as
my hate, yours to me, shirt-tight.
In Navy Air Harry said the pilot's face in the burning plane
locked inside howled shoot him.
The Secret Agent whispered to the guard posted
four stories down. They watched him jerk through the window.

Nana asked me hello in the hall as pale
as when she fainted (thought deathful
Epilepsy) in class.I rush to the back of the room
while a question molding in the air hung
after twenty years of teaching. Nurses with satchel charges
of intercoms broke in to save the now revived
faint, and Conrad, Horse Dealer's Daughter, who was it?

So today I was scared of her face so February pale,
wanted to whisper heal heal salve us.
But it came back around the circle as
my hate, yours to me, shirt-tight.

Gill Holland



CHRISTINE'S LACE

delicate
glistening
silver silhouettes
a tapestry in white
on blue-black velvet
softest
deepest
hue
befitting
a queen

all walls forgotten
all rocks laid aside
you still wear a cape
a beautiful cloak
on which is embroidered
Christine's Lace
in ice-fire
dogwood
and night.

Kathy Fesperman

Phases -
Strike me with you
as deeply as
the magnet in your
eyes.
For now you see,
I'm weathered,
Seeing past love's
first glow,
Seeing thrills
foreshadow challenges,
which define a love
as it grows.
Love's the only reality
you know,
One day you
build a sandcastle -
But the next day
you face the
tide...

Denise Boerckel

Somewhere there's an analogy here
Something about an Etruscan goddess
Who dies of loneliness
When her lover is killed in battle

Yet, I can't relate it to my life
I'm no Etruscan goddess
And you'll never die in battle
Well, I guess I was wrong--
(It's probably nothing anyway)

But, I can't help feeling
The loneliness since we've been apart
--Maybe that's the point of this whole thing
The analogy, I mean

Sonya Brooks

ROUGH MAGIC

Rough wood met rough flesh in an embrace. He brought the wood close to his gnarled face for inspection. He grunted his satisfaction, his eyes shining with a finish that never dulled. They shone with emotion, but much more. He was the magician, and this dull, unsightly bit of tree his prop. Under the lacquer-like shine of his eyes rested the heart of his knowledge. It pulsed through his body faster than new blood. It reached high tide in his hands--the outlet from dreams to substance.

He hefted the piece to his shoulder and nearly fell under its weight. But there was a strength beyond his sixty years. There was something in the wood that charged him to the touch. Laboriously, he made his way to the Place. There he laid the wood on the table as gently as one would lie a child in a cradle. The magic was about to begin.

He knocked his pipe against the table to gain the undivided attention of a non-existent audience. Solemnly demanding their silence, he filled it. He stroked the wood with gentle eyes, housed in an unbefitting, weatherbeaten face. Pipe lit and positioned, he approached the wood with reverence and a vague embarrassment. He knew he would be baring her very soul-- so fine-- cutting through her veins, shaping her to his design. He took her into his comprehensive hands, and that brief apology was his last pause.

He gave her curve and nook and flair. He carved out elegance with the wave of his hand. Human sweat ignored, he made her smoother than marble. At times she rebelled, but to patient persistence always gave way. He cut her and bore through her with such speed that onlookers would have thought him mad, had they not noticed the perfection of each corner, turn and seam.

He stood back and defied any power that claimed sole ability to turn caterpillar to butterfly. The brilliancy in his eyes was now turned back upon him with full intensity. A prideful glow tickled his body, and he held her close as he walked down the street to their house. He offered her to them in restless anticipation. None of the expected words were said. The only sound was the unfolding of a crisp bill, identical to several others, dingy new. A sigh of disappointment sealed the bargain. She was whisked inside, her shelves to be lined with plastic assembly-line toys made by the miracle-mule of technology at the rate of ten a minute.

They watched the "strange old man" from their picture window. They saw him turn away without hesitation--his sadness within--and head back for another piece of rough wood to hold in his rough hands.

Jeanne Lark

Photo by Denise Boerckel

Passages building to crescendo...
Like a life's breath
It builds and
Breaks and
Starts again
In flashes...

It's easing down a dappled road,
And the colors,
And the intensity,
Painting you...
Yet reflecting
The twilight.

And I saw a tree
Reach for the sky,
With a caress so gentle -
It was velvet
And it was electric.

Such a wondrous smile...
"Go down
Go down
To Knoxville town -
For there I hear
A magic's in the air...

And I saw it in sparkles
And I saw it from the bridge
And I saw it in changes
It's a living life we live

You can't hope to stop it
You can't help to hope it
It's in the music that we
breathe

Come to the music
Come to the magic
Come to the passage
that we give

Denise Boerckel

Not only do I judge a book by its cover,
I like to read it -
take it apart -
And sometimes...
rearrange the ending to suit me.

Carla Van Cleave

RECIPROCAL

When was the last time you told me you
loved me, you big, black pillar of incompetence?

Don't mean to cut you down none but hell, I pay
my dues and take my rap but someone's got to love
you (you know I do) and hold up that limp ego
like you worship that limp thing lying against your leg.

But, like I said, when was the last time you
told me you loved me? Is it above you or below you?
Does it hurt you? I never want to hurt you
but I just need to know 'cause I've been
castrated, too.

Terry A. Knox

(You warper of men's souls)
playing head games
you pilot your way through lives
gaining clear flight
from emotions you never felt before
--nor ever will
but you can't play with me
you'll never get clearance
through my head
--this airport's closed

Sonya Brooks

reflections on a glass figurine
of a woman that never existed

i shall see the times mirrored
in the glass of your life
reflected, refracted
in facets cut
in faces worn uneven
though smooth
holding images, prisms
from viewpoints unique
which some would call
distorted
reflected
refracted
on surfaces smooth
and curved
because of you.

Kathy Fesperman

i am constantly entangled
in relationships
which border too closely upon my dreams
and must extricate myself
gently
with as little pain imparted
as is left when i have absorbed it all
and am saturated with the hurt:
only that overflow---(beyond my control)
touches another person

visions accessible
appear in faded glory
too easily embraced,
too near to touch---
holding a premonition of regret.

the circles i trace
lead singular to you alone
and speak my desire to wait,
to work for that future now offered
at no cost to me---
yet too high a price to pay.

i have left you, love,
for hours turning even into
windswept, searching days---
and have explored the strength within me
that clamoured there for liberation.

and yet, in my travels
in found myself free with you---
a greater independence of spirit
for growth
than alone.

i've fallen again in love with you
for an equal amount to share
from the journey
through deepest me...
i found everywhere,
you.....
permeating my character,
reaching gentle to my hurt---
healing,
soothing,

making room for growth.

cont'd next page.

buried in depth,
almost
your influence hidden in me,
where i'd never dared explore---
now exposed
by successful search to find me,
you...everywhere,
equidistant,
time now for love.

Sandi Lyn

TEARS OF AMBER

In her fifteenth summer
He came to her window,
Waving his lantern of fancy.
She welcomed his light
Because she was shoot-young and thirsty
For his stories about Egypt,
The golden-eyed camels
Swimming north up the Nile.

In her sixteenth spring,
He brought her violets,
Showed her how to open the petals,
Exposing the heart.
He explained the mystery of fire,
Smiling approval when she struck
Two cold things together
To make a spark.

In the winter of her seventeenth year,
He knelt beside her bed,
Whispered of a battle at Dunsinane,
His duty as a knight.
When they sent her his sword,
She cried solid tears of amber,
Each one encapsulating
A worm of grief.

Ann Matthews

Like a milk bath on a
slow-paced Tuesday afternoon
you refresh me-
scrub away my flesh
and let it float in the tub
and allow me to attain
my Nirvana
by letting you escape
through the hole in my head
(everyone's got one)
A blending separation-
And looking up I saw
me in the same murky color
that fills the tub-
The substance overhanging me
I know like a cloud-
then you nose-dive into the tub
with your prune-skinned fragment,
pull the plug,
and escape down the drain-

So, if, while taking a shower in L.A. sometime,
My spirited other half invades your privacy,
please send it home -
C.O.D.-

Linda Jennings

You touch me with your ruthless soul
And take but what you can
To leave me barren as a rock, upon the frozen land
A cold, hard object
Whose soul cannot be reached
For it has washed away in the winter rain of
Your remorselessness...

Meg Masterman

OPENING

1.

In the beginning there were no words,
Only shapes in the mind of the creator.
I listen with the inner ear,
Watch with the inner eye,
I wait to know those shapes.
I listen to the flutter of last year's leaves,
I watch spring's green deepen into summer's,
I see the shadow coil its way up the pine
Tree's trunk and shiver in the wind.
I wait to know those shapes.

2.

Now I see only the surface,
In time I will see all.
The curved wing of a seagull,
A daisy pressed into the leaf of a book,
Sea shells and sand dollars,
Waves as they curl upon my toes and then
Retreat, sucking the sand
With them into the mystery of the night.

3.

Only the mystery is real--
The touching of lips which is also
The touching of hearts--
The moment where the green leaf of spring
And the yellow rose of summer
Merge in the undying truth of love.
There is no greenness, no yellowness,
No overpowering scent of gardenia,
No curve of breast and thigh
Unless the mystery is there also.

4.

Opening in the windows of the soul
Slowly, gently lifted by loving hands,
Petals in the spring warmed by the sun.
With the rhythm of the rising tide
It comes now
Like the slow blush of sunrise
It comes.
How shall I sing this song?

5.

Suffering is first. God suffered
Before he loved. Weary of his
Mythic kingdom he came to earth
To know the cry of anguish in the night.
Silly scribes sketch shallow scenarios
In Hollywood flats.
Love lies elsewhere. Icarus knows.

6.

Out of pain comes joy....
The unutterable cry of delight
When lovers touch after long absence,
Fingers upon smooth marble,
The cool taste of wine on summer evenings,
The moment of climax
When flesh and spirit meet
In the crucible of love

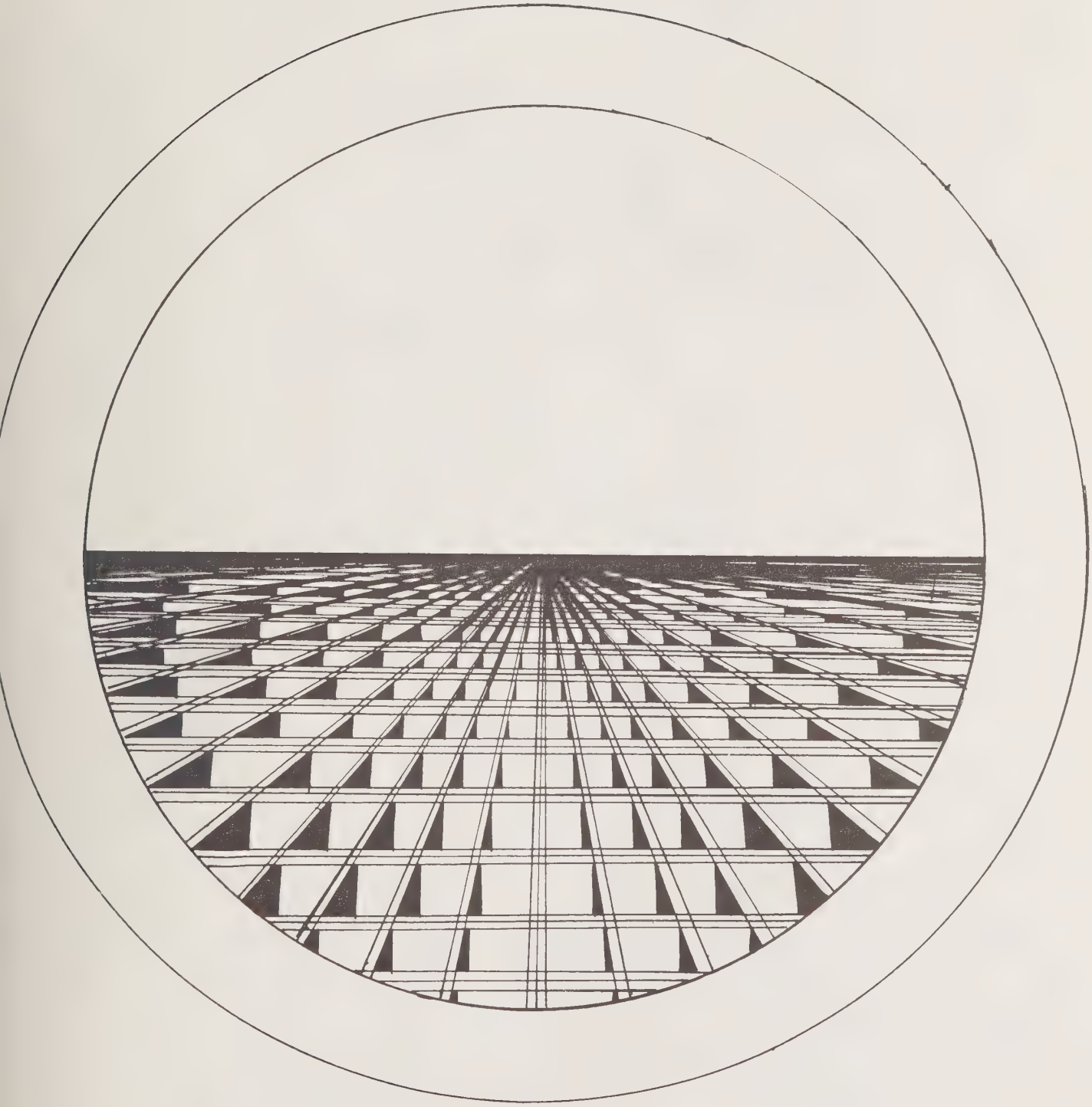
7.

We learn by doing. Perhaps there
Is no love, only loving. Do you
Remember the day at dusk when
In the lingering, lagging sun
We pricked our thumbs and made
Them bleed, commingling our souls?
Is not that too a kind of making love?

8.

At the end, peace.The petals
Open; extended fully,
Reaching their rest. Images fade. And
Only the odor remains, intoxicating
The brain.

Anthony S. Abbot



Drawing by Linda Walters

(from the Wife Poems)

IX **SHE-HAWK**

There are swarms of collected movement
throughout the combine of a wooden structure.
Energy like lost stars
in cumulus night
pierces.

When the freeze is hard
air in the lungs
scream the wings over head and
down-

eyes on the three-threaded design below.
Laid-over ancestral blanket,
the fields shrewing talons back to me,
frayed beige ribbon of corn leaves
twisting through snow.

Circle the grounds,
something predatory in me
craving you,
like the little frog,
all that opens, a deep
grovelling croak
lost somewhere in the night.
In the spring there is to sow.
Now food is scarcer,
Cradle the clever woven fishbone,

and fly,
Inchriver cross below me, flee
the ruthless needlebranch
of Janus.

Janus, tidif, cold
man bird
the face of hemingway
the soul unheard.

beyond the river I have no nest,
poisoned fish off the factory shore.
what is more, what is more,
the city bloats,
the fishermen cry at the door.

The river flows through here too.
I can tell you every grey cement
it kisses in resentment each morning,

Sickness it spews to its shores in defiance,
every point of entry
into your lake.
I can tell you every chasm
the water finds to cleanse itself,
waiting,
And how it hurts,
the lake:

but they love so fast,
they dispose so easily,
bile spray of the fruit trees
making thin the eggs.

You should only fly once,
to see how beautiful you are where you live,
though selfish and lonely:

that we both want the earth,
yet cannot dig into each other's dirt,
root there and remain,
that only one of us planted the garden,
that only one of us built the fires.
How many images
must I crack open at your doorstep
to tell you simply?

see, anyway,
but to hell with the rest of
the world.
it tears apart policy,
and returns to its wife,
hangdog, each night.
It is already february.
Seed catalogues pile by by your
bed,
poems next to mine,
repeals of may.
but look around:

an instant,
like armaments,
blown down to the tiniest point inside me.

Will no child ever sing in your house?

When first settled,
the trees cut,
the hawks fled.
Now with the hibernation,
generation, listen closely,
my love,
the trees grow while you sleep,
the hawks return,
screaming in the night
awaiting some sense
of the huge nests knitted of torn out
perfumed hair,
proliferate seedless pretty fruit,
sop fern without root.

(cont'd next page...)

["She-Hawk", cont.]

One can only pretend
spring for so long,
before the lake crashing down the door,
the heart itself poison.

the bees,
the ease
with which they

honey,

if I flew over your home
would you let 'em shoot me for stealing chicks?
or would you spend hours
taking the fishhook from my throat,
put your tongue along the cut?

12 times in the year
the hook catches,
bile spray of the fruit trees.
Tell me, when is spring, love?

I think,
I cannot fly
choking on blood.

Kathy McGoldrick

AUBADE

Breathing over your perfumed head
I hold as the earth turns into the sun's realm.

Tornado and tree hold
as earth rolls weight into realm of star darkness,
the sun passes off the last tip of field,
and suddenly quiet out of the fields of sun storm
we pitch cold and stellar Siberian
into the molecular wind.

Who lives in the turning as he reaches,
looks back, dawn into darkling,
who cords his strength in the galleys, rowers, sails?

What constellations buckle
as he turns to see the breakers he has heard over
shouting?

Gill Holland

and on that note
that brushstroke
i close
knowing i have little time
and paper left
to record you here

and with these words
this penstroke
i scratch a last mark
on the canvas
signing my portrait of you
knowing i can return here
anytime
and find you as you were.

Kathy Fesperman

Photo by Denise Boerckel

Identity struggle is the theme when an aggressive woman's climb up the career ladder in a San Francisco publishing company takes a downward turn. Consumed by misplaced anger and frustration, she seeks consolation through the feminist movement and a husband-hunting soap opera addict in the company coffee room. In the following excerpt, she picks up some clues in beginning her search for self.

SYNCOPATION

While a group of us lunched, I wondered if I, alone, found Tex abominable. It was always reassuring to hear other people talk about him. Personally, I felt that his idiosyncracies should have gotten him fired by now in a publishing company that, by industry standards, could only be termed conservative. But, listening to the conversation, I began to realize that it was much like mothers discussing their children's latest pranks. They were not only tolerated; they were adored.

Jeanne was talking about the miserly nature of Tex, awe-struck over having heard that he saved $500 a month. Deb, on her second glass of wine, giggled to me, "I bet even you would give up women's lib for a dowry like that. You could sit home watching 'The Young and the Restless.'"

Later, at the office, I was about to fall asleep from the wine. Tex dropped in to ask me if I was going to the office barbecue the next evening. I answered that I didn't generally go in for that sort of thing. Tex said that he didn't either, but that he was "doing up a barbecue the likes of which no New Yorker has ever tasted" and urged me to come try it. There was a challenge in his eyes that made me say I'd be there.

• • • •

A movement next to me jarred me into awareness of my throbbing temples. I opened one eye and saw Jack Thompson, lying about 10 inches away from me, staring wide-eyed. "What....?" I sputtered.

"As for how I got here, well, I was about one jigger more sober than you. As for what happened, nothing--although I tried like hell all night."

I turned over and groaned.

I found myself apologizing for my behavior, embarrassed that Jack had witnessed my foolish condition. "I'm not used to drinking much."

"Why did you?" he asked.

Because I needed to. Because Deb's diversions weren't enough any more. Because a cause like women's lib couldn't compensate for my disillusionment." Because I should have been editor-in-chief, not Tex. I knew that job forwards and backwards. I played the politics for three years, waiting for a chance. And they gave it to a man!" The bitterness tumbled out.

After an uncomfortable silence, Jack said, gently: "I know as well as anyone your knowledge of that job. But, believe me, you didn't lose out because you're a woman."

"Oh, sure," I mumbled. "Then why else?"

Jack was out of the bed, dressing. He answered my question with one of his own. "Listen, innocent, do you know why Howard Lieber left Vista Publishing so abruptly? And I don't mean the official reason."

I vented my bitterness on Jack. "I guess the rumor mill wasn't very effective. And it happens that women aren't allowed in the gym club, so **I'm** no privy to such information."

Jack's hand was on the doorknob. "I can see you woke up on the wrong side of the bed. You know, I liked you a lot better last night." The door closed behind him.

My memories turned back to a girl of 18, uncertain about a lot of things, but in love with the sophisticated glitter of New York City and its people. Attending a small women's college, I met a number of women whom I admired and emulated. At first, it was self-improvement. But the emulation became more calculated until, at 30, I was finding myself more and more confused. And two of Jack's statements haunted me: like someone who prefers the paperback edition to the gilty-edged hardback, he had liked me last night. And, Howard Lieber had in some mysterious way affected my not becoming editor-in-chief.

• • • •

I dialed Jack Thompson's extension before I could lose my nerve. I asked him to dinner that evening, but he declined in a cool voice. "Well, how about tomorrow night?" I forced myself to ask.

"I said too much the other morning," he said regretfully.

"Too much to stop now," I insisted. "Please, Jack, I have to know why."

"All right," he said slowly. "But I'm playing racquetball after work. My place, at eight o'clock tonight. I'll fix a light dinner."

The minutes dragged until eight o'clock, and although I didn't know what to expect, I wasn't prepared for Jack's story. It was one in which Tex was the hero, Lieber the villian, and I was suspect.

When Jack explained how Lieber had tried to sabotage the company, I couldn't help but be disbelieving. Why would he do it? Jack had the answers, though. As for me, Lieber's devious schemes had been right under my nose. The company had to ask itself whether I had been aware of them. Certainly they didn't even consider promoting me into Lieber's place. In fact, Tex had convinced them that it would be unfair to discharge me unless there were some proof I was involved.

A few days later, I informed Tex that I was resigning. He asked me what the reason was, and I told him I was going home to get my head together. "Well," he nodded, "I knew you were unhappy here. You'll be better off home in New York."

"I'm not going to New York," I said. "But you knew that."

He gave his 10-gallon grin.

"By the way," I drawled, "back where I come from in Odessa, Texas, they have mighty good barbecue. But you've got 'em beat."

Nancy Ford

Your immeasurable skill at manipulation
tossing, turning me aside
bringing me close again
then total rejection
--until the next time
Yet, I wait; patient with you
impatient with myself
--until the next time
And finally the next time comes
you're ready for me
and I'm ready for you
but not for myself
Yet, I play your game
and your poker face fools me again

Sonya Brooks

isolated in a corner corridor
  stranded,
      and threatened by loss,
  again---
              of laughter,
  i pace restlessly within myself
and in claustrophobic panic
      seek an escape route
  in which i pass not under your gaze.

Sandi Lyn

As I pretend to calculate your mood
  again I acquiesce
  I am sometimes generous
  in that way -
  I am sometimes forced
  to tapdance around
  your darkened clouds
  just as I stumble through a maze -
  as I sidestep here and there
  in graveyards so as not
  to desecrate hallowed ground -
Grabbing up a camera,
  I take a picture of you
  taking a picture
  of something
  perhaps your grandmother's tombstone
    and area of swollen ground
        (no flowers)
  This is for backmail
    but will not turn out
    the sun, blurred and dull,
    is becoming Moon -
Last Chance -
  I impersonate your mood
    grab your zoom
    and crash it against
    a weathered 1839 piece of marble -
        glass shatters in
        kaleidescope patterns
        reflecting the same dusky light
        but in calculated angles.

Photo by Meg Masterman

NOCTURNE

ticking,
ticking,
darkness,
a little cold welcome in the heat of night.
endless searching,
not a lack of direction,
but confusion from my black blindness.
hands puppeted to heart
pounding,
pounding,
crashing the root,
not yet,
not quiet,
not lost in the fragments glued together and masquerading
as a whole.
darkness hides impurities if you can learn to fall
into it quickly enough.
confusion,
the music only serves to hide the words,
it paints them white and sickly,
hiding in the corner, they stand shivering against the cold.
falling,
falling,
free to your embryonic sea now.
at home in the bloodiness of the womb,
always interceding and sheltering,
the cave and the castle,
both are hard to heat.
veiled and robed,
crouching fetal,
dancing circular,
festive is the night
echoing,
echoing,
against the walls,
trembling from the sound, searching for its owner
in the darkness
ticking,
ticking,
finally exploding and spitting the sun smoking
into the sky,
executing the blackness
and killing its illusions.

Bill Gouge

sitting
here with you
just sitting
talking
thinking
thinking back so far
remembering...
memories i thought i'd forgotten
glad now i did not
looking back
into my past
with you
finding gemstones
i had overlooked ---
or buried

finding emeralds at dawn
where at midnight
i stumbled and fell.

Kathy Fesperman

CHANCE

(I drop my bombs
Like seeds -
Can't tell how the flowers will
Smell.)

Fight --
Plan --
I dare you.

Design

A delicate
Glass
House.
Make
It

Perfect.

A sparrow
Drops
A boulder:

Crash.

Dianne Hood

morriña

(the passionate dark longing for
something loved and absent)

aqua eyes
shadow icicles to her pale lashes
unbraided
brushes of ash hair
quiet,
until the final ends
canvassed,
crawl onto mid-back
of black leather.

beech roots;
a woman's fingers
are her hair,
an only
always ready
phantom
thirsting downward
at
god, that you offer
baskets of stone
scraped of glacier,

tumult erection of rock
honoring dryness,
eroding pits
in age's sequence -
morraine,
more rain -
morriña de
ohos negros,
sombre;
black gloom
into the pits
the glacier ate.

morriña,
a beat
beads frozen
on branches
intermittent,
the glistening
onyx stones.

where do your
eyes leave
trails of spark

whetted
at ice-told
beech roots?

yellow hair wiped
his feet, solidly planted
at heaven.

one sinner
hanging the other
rooted.
cross-referenced
lovers, a historical page...

jesus, it is hard to feel;
los ohos negros, sombre-
morriña.

los ohos negros-
your eyes are black leather.

Kathy McGoldrick

Like a child, cocky
while being photographed,
You appeared a little bit
strange -
I pretended not to notice
but it is sometimes difficult
to ignore
actions of jackhammer intensity-
You were as rude
as a telephone ringing
twenty-five times straight,
stopping, then starting again -
Your vanity suits you well
it is sometimes as entertaining
as a flat soprano -
And I do not relish
your short-sighted gynocological examination
of me before our introduction-
And not meaning to really
come down on your case
I just thought I'd let you know
how I feel before we meet
through an assertive communicative technique-
aggravated eye contact -

Linda Jennings

FROM THE CREEKBED

Dark Green shadows flit between leaves
and I feel rain coming and there are no drops.
Black water swirls two walnuts tandem
down the creek where the stump sticks out,
a dead heart, leafless, no sap charging the once wild veins.

A limber pole, the worm in the crack in the upsidedown limb
stuffed like broccoli in the stream, smells of running bream.
My eyes turn the color of pumpkinseed, follow secret courses
where colors fade into sunfish eyes, wavering.

I need a dark leap, strike, a distant run,
broke line in a wondrous path of leaving.
In my boots I sweat a realm of urgency.
When will scales scatter this ease,
spirit the rippling shoot of fin and hands?

Shelby Stephenson

THE DOCTOR IS OUT

Today I closed the door and cried.

I will not talk about scholarly progress
At the northeastern southwestern conference
For the not so later Renaissance, or Richard
Burton's latest mistress, or the lost cost
Of energy and its effect on slipping salaries.

I will not sip casually my cooling cup
Of coffee and say with benign affirmation,
"Your paper has depth and richness, Mr. Maxwell."

Let them knock. All day long the door will
Be closed. Let them all knock.

The doctor is out, out, out,
Out of his mind, lying on his office floor
With no shoes on, huddled in a ball,
Crying. How do you like that, all you
Nearer farther middle east semi experts
With your rolls of microfilm, your
Theses, antitheses, and syntheses!

Anthony S. Abbot

Riding down an old highway
With snatches of old songs
  and emotions on the radio.
But like you said -
  "You just can't help them,"
So I drove on...

And I was just wondering
  where I stood,
When the dam broke -
And I saw it all float by ...

Old things ...
All the "remember the times when"
  tinted by the glow of you -
All the times to come
That will still be tainted by you.

And I guess I've heard this song
One or two times now ...
The words are just different
And a different two tango.

And in a way,
This is my farewell song to you,
The pieces of me
I took out
Of my back pocket
And gave you,
I'm taking back now...

I just need to have them
  somewhere quiet
When I turn and smile at you.

Denise Boerckel

As a child does with suds in
A dishpan
To plumb the mysteries
Beaneath,
I stick my finger
In the fog,
Clearing a place for me
To look --

I am breaking
Old habits
Like worn out plates
In a wastebin.

Hunting among the debris
I find a treasure
Or two.

Ducks
Step on slippery sand
With an awkward dignity
They
Manage to get where they're going.

Dianne Hood

SECRETS

words unspoken of feelings
    rising from below the exterior,
restrained, called in check
    at the surface
        by rationale.
hidden truths unexpressed,
    waiting for time to catch us---
      and yet...
you gaze upon me,
      and watching me; i see you travel
intently inward, searching,
    even asking that i share freely,
openly,
      verbally
    without respect for time to change---
so i watch you,
    and follow your lead of silence...
    broken only by our eyes, which
never learned to keep a secret.

Sandi Lyn

In the subdued light of a flickering candle...
The shadows danced from wall to wall.
The shadows of illusion and reality
Beckoning to all...
Come dance with us
And somewhere between the shadows of illusion and
Reality
My shadow found it's place upon the walls
Just as the light faded and the flickering candle
        Dissolved.

Meg Masterman

Lips licking and smacking with the remembrance of
tasty treats of the past still warm on your rising
buds,
eyes lit like the candles of Christmas still
burning in this cold February icing on March.
Hands trembling from the knowledge of yesterday
and the hopes of tomorrow.

I'm rabbit-shy and not often hunted dearest dog
breathy at my snowy tail.
I'm sorry with suspicion bred on the six 'o clock
news and stories from dime store novels hid
under my bed.
I'm too nervous to sit still and scared to run,
Would you follow, running me back into my hole
or up a tree?
Perhaps you'd eat me immediately, or tear me apart
limb by limb respectively,
or rob me of my fur and leave me naked and shivering
in the winter wind.
Maybe you'd just talk to me.

I've got to get out of here,
I'm afraid to stay.
I hate your eyes, bold and hopeful,
and your arms, motioning wildly,
as if I couldn't see.
Your words, shaking and excited,
inviting, "I'm real good and I'm free."
I hate the terror my eyes and the mirror keep revealing
in me.

I'll leave you to your tears and your
bed of coals burned down to ashes now.
I hate you
because you're me
thirty years from now.

Anonymous

Photo by Meg Masterman

THE SAVAGE

His eyes were reflectors.
Flat and impenetrable lakes
that held him prisoner.
His words were metamorphisized
in the dull chambers of his mouth.
They were not playful,
but fell, stillborn, to the floor.

His heart was held within--
all soft and unmarred.
In mint condition.
With it, he flung his arms around me
without reservation--
except his mama's. She said
"Oh stop, honey. Maybe she doesn't like
boys like you."

He only asked to give.
Not clever words--his weren't sanforized.
Not knowing looks--his eyes weren't defrosted.
He was a savage.
He did not know that love
is an Amana Radarange
or that happiness
is flying to Florida for Christmas.
So the savage gave himself.

The purity of his love-gift stung me.
It had no artificial additives and
he served it straight up.
His embrace was tight, mine unsure.
He looked beyond for reassurance.
"Pity," said mama, sadly shaking her head.
"Born that way," offered papa, over the newspaper.

Society, with her golden curls and
just-so frock, in her unreproachable politeness
dubbed him "the alien".
And just to make sure that he
lived up to his name,
She lowered her eyes, or turned away
in sight of him. As if only that easily
the savage--and his too-strange gift
would simply--disappear.

Jeanne Lark

Were you in the parlor
When Mary broke the unicorn?
The one made of crystal,
The one who broke
Light into a rainbow
With the prism in its horn--
Were you there when she
Picked
It
Up
With fingers greasy
From a cold fried chicken lunch
And held it to the light,
Then---

Dianne Hood

Like a caged animal
I peered through the bars
Allowed only to move so far
As the days became nights
I tried strategy to undo the lock
However this failed
As a silent onlooker
I saw many faces
Hands that touched but did not feel
I heard voices
But did not respond
For I was an outcast
One day a new figure appeared
She was not like the others
Carefully I studied her
By a chance happening she spotted me
With positive steps
She approached
When she stopped
She touched each bar
Until they all vanished
As she helped me from my crouched position
I found that my legs were stiff
Fearing the perfect soul
I hung my head
As she helped me to my feet
She spoke softly
I wanted to grasp each word
Cautiously I looked into her eyes
Finding them both warm and meaningful
I noticed one was blue and one was green

Cici Stark

Can't you hear the stars at night?
They add the rhythm to the section of crickets
just under the window
and to cats crawling into trees.

Their presence is quietly walking on stage
beside a young one in some club.

The wind is rising
It smells of rain but it won't
This time it just smells of night.
It shines music.

Mary Ann Farrell

AN EPISODE OF...

Is it something I said?
Or the way I seem to appear
That shrinks you into the
shadows and drift into a
memory I once had, that
used to belong to you and
yesterday when we walked
together
  -in the night of
our sleep, the hope
of tomorrow carried me
farther out on the crest of
the wave,
    and yet all along
you knew I shouldn't have
ventured that far...
  so I rode along with the tide,
until it came back to the
edge of reality,
  crashing there, to settle
among the bits of broken
shells and tangled souvenirs,
unable to return again to
the shore for the
premature pain
  of you.

Susan Westphal

the blush of sleep
faintly paints your eyelids
rests on your cheeks
the sable---
such sable!---
that frames your eyes
lies still
frame on frame
meets itself
and you smile ever so faintly
at what i know not
though i can guess some of your dreams
you are still
so silent and still
but for the sleeping rythms
of heartbeat and breath
that tell me you are alive
and you have no worry
you are warm and safe
at least for the time
you sleep
the faint blush of sleep
rests rosy on eyelids and cheeks
and i marvel at sleep
painting you.

Kathy Fesperman

I'd always kept such close watch
  about my wall,
If ever anyone wished to talk,
I would stay within my wall
  and talk over it.
Always careful to never let anyone in
  or myself out.
And then you appeared,
  as though out of my carefully guarded dreams.
You seemed so kind,
  you were so convincing.
After much deliberation,
  I opened my door
    and you came in
Suddenly,
  my wall fell about us,
    leaving us in the midst of a pile of sand -
And we -
  built a castle.

Carla Van Cleave

Drawing by Libby Aiken

Life is hunger,
unquenchable,
never quite defined
on city streets,
concrete and absolute,
or canvas,
with it's color and abstraction.
Nipple and breast,
mouth and jagged with new-born teeth,
biting and sucking
for something more.

The brain folds up accordion-like
storing what was once learned,
newly-found.
Hoarding the knowledge as if it were owned
singularly,
and precious,
emerald and faceted
locked in the pink and the grey,
folding and unfolding,
folds outstretched and nervous
for something more.

Loins are searching,
savagely demanding,
blocking reason
with a stronger light
more pronounced and revealing in the darkness hidden there.
Semen spilt on ice
leaves no stain,
but runs off into the earth, hopeless
fathering nothing.
Still searching for something unfound,
hidden in corridors.
Searching
for something more.

Is there something more
as you walk through the door?
Faces blank like stone chipped
and unfinished by sculpture's hands.
Empty in our brief togetherness
departing,
untouched, unmoved.
Wondering if
there's something more.

The heart stands naked
and proud of her nakedness
saluting with no shields to guard,
no locked doors to protect.
Standing naked with arms outstretched,
bloody in the night
ready to bleed
for something more.

And men walk on,
faces, clouds unafraid of destiny,
even as they look at the granite and feel
the slap,
the first breath,
angry and crying,
new-breath awakened.
searching proudly in the face of mortality,
for something more than writing on a stone
Always crying
for something more.

Bill Gouge

And you are like my
finest poem -
Softspoken and sincere,
Struggling through a wall
of restlessness
To emerge gentle and light
clear.

With you, I've seen the
trees reach
And gently touch the sky,
With you, I've heard a
river sing
And never stopped to
question why.

And somewhere beyond a lyric -
I catch a moment in your
eyes.
As gentle as a night breeze,
As truthful as a sigh.

Denise Boerckel

My exposed nerve, and the heart in my
eyes must have drawn you, and your
sadistic intentions my way.

Picking up a little hope some lucky one
tossed on the ground, I chase your love,
following the path of thorns searching for
a rose.

Wearing my pain like a crown, I journey
into your eyes, and deeper into the
cloudy soul beyond.

I sense the evil, but like sweet Eve,
I finish the forbidden fruit, "taste the
poison, as you must," was your reply.

Senses soaring, the evil life-blood of passion
pounds through these veins. I am forced
to watch hopelessly as you toss my life
out an open window.

So I lose either way,
I fall chasing,
or die waiting.

Bill Gouge

JOHN CALHOUN GARVIN'S WOMEN

Named for the roaring statesman
of a dead nation,
John C. lived his early years
watching his father drift west
without his genteel southern mother
or his brother or him
and later at ten saw
his twelve-year old brother die,
his useless appendix exploding.
His mother sent him to college
on the first John C.'s lawn
where he drank and chased
loose women until he was expelled.
So he went home and married
an old-maid librarian
who bought bourbon she let him drink
and who could not rival
the mother's beauty and softness.
He came to family picnics summers
with bourbon in his pocket,
tobacco on his teeth, arthritis in his hands.
He told the young boys dirty stories,
leered at the young girls and fished
while his mother and his wife
talked about how much better
John's "condition" was than last year.
And when his mother, his iron gentle mother,
died and was buried in January cold,
he was too shaky or too drunk
to leave the funeral limo
paid for by his wife, not pretty,
not soft, but rivaling the mother
in her strength and her love for John.
So he sat in the car with a bottle,
tobacco stained hands trembling,
and the wife--true child of the mother--
stood motionless and alone
as the coffin was lowered.

Jane Martin

The morning after I awake
--the room in chaos
And in the windowsill
A glass of flat Perrier
from before
A simple reminder
of us

Sonya Brooks

CHECK DAY COMING $

Through the paper thin wall is the muffled cry of a baby
and the slow dragging of its mother's feet...
just another mouth to feed.
And as the child suckles, the mother looks blankly
in the mirror at the image "he" once called pumpkin-head
and she remembers how she giggled girlishly and realizes
he was probably mocking the shape of her head.
She sighs...the baby stirs.

As she stares blankly out through the pasty windows at
the dull darkness, she remembers the good, old, young times
when she found it hard to go home because she was diggin'
on a guy with processed hair; and she recalls wanting to
be a model...
And the child stirs.

She rocks it gently to an old Gladys Knight record she
used to sing to her lover who she found out too late
didn't like kids...
and she gazes at the small bundle in her arms resting
peacefully...
she sighs...tomorrow is check day.

Terry A. Knox

One quiet night
The baby crept
From its crib
And made itself known
Pitter-pattering
About
In the back halls of my mind;
Not coming straight forward
Till too full grown
To fit
Back in the crib.
It suprised me
By its size.

Love has sneaky feet.

Dianne Hood

DRAGON'S TEETH

Fierce old man
Dragging your ruined body
Back from death
Again and yet again,

I listen.

The laughter of jackals
Wounds my godlike pride.

Motherless
I sprung from Kronos' head.
Fatherless I grew,
The angels' child
Who knew no earthly love.

Is it for this that you return
Like Hamlet's ghost
To place the imprint of your hand
Upon my soul?

Fierce old man
Dragging your ruined body
Back again from death,

Is it for me
You cast the shadow
Of your love?

Anthony S. Abbot

Photo by Meg Masterman

Reason?

Gone.

Daemons
Copulating,
Spawning...
In the darkness

I cannot see.

Anger and fear
Swirling...

A fragile dish is broken.
In an empty room,

A great rush of sound——
Why does it wake
No one
But me?

Handless,
I struggle
To hold a rope
That is not....

Dianne Hood

FANTASY I

Out here in the country,
I think about a Manhattan apartment,
Nineteen twenty-eight version,
With a fireplace,
High ceilings,
Heavy doors,
And Louis Quatorze wallpaper.
While you are at the piano
Playing Sonata Pathetique,
I, in a white peignoir,
Dangling angel sleeves,
Set our breakfast table
With bacon and cantaloupe.
You stop.
The ormolu clock ticks,
And we smile at each other.

Ann Matthews

amusing,
but you've missed the point.
i want no encouragement,
understand,
i want no long distance calls,
station to station, heart to heart.
pour your passion and sniff your powders with another,
someone a bit more naive,
less lines,
less scars,
more heart.
no power left,
i've had the electricity killed, it's mostly darkness
now, not suitable for the original flame.
enough,
too much
enough,
too soon
enough,
goodbye to shivers shimmying tensil and
goodbye to your gravel touch
too long longed for.
goodbye to your gravel heart,
glorius sheath, invincible.
goodbye to your stoniness, cold and solid against
my skin.
quiet, don't talk,
i can't listen
my ears are pounding
from promises cotton can't kill.
enough.

Bill Gouge

Wet warm walls surrounded me.
Security sought to strangle me.
About to succumb,
I caught a glimpse of
the dagger of reality
and decided to live instead.

Thrust forth, the walls crumbled.
Nothing stood between the dagger
and me.
I felt its point at sunset, and
marvelling at the colors,
I've sought it out again.

Jeanne Lark

I AM THE TYPIST

My land,
And her hungry men
And women possessed by satin
Look for a moment to
a product of crises.

Woman,
The American Prettiness,
Long-legged
And golden-haired,
Nose turned up
To snap
A picture
For cover
Of magazine.

I am a typist as far as you know.
Poetry is my profit,
And I will not share it with all.

Come and see inside of my body
To volcanic explosions.
Bury your head in my chest,
Only if you are not afraid to be burned.

I am a product of your
Barren
American
Machine
I am scalded and frozen,
And once when I was universal
I gave up the child
So your wealth would not devour it.

There is no way for you to pass me away
As the pretty lunatic.
Reason me out,
But you will never
Shove me off
For your reasoning is my poetic profit.

You will never know me.
I am the typist.

Snapping gorgeous
Gorgon images

shall crumble your camera
Exposing magnetic particles
Filming
stone nakedness
Freezing
shade-exposure heat relief to
scalding ice stability.

I want a potential

to choke

your sterile affluence.

Clickety-clack
Clackety-click
Snap!

Kathy Mc Goldrick

Anonymous

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